Maytime in the City Theatres

IVY SAWYER in "SHE'S A GOOD FELLOW"

UNA FLEMING IN "The VELVET LADY"

AUDREY MAPLE IN "MONTE CRISTO, JR."

JULIA BALLEW IN The CENTURY MIDNIGHT WHIRL

MOLLIE KING IN "GOOD MORNING JUDGE"

MARY EATON IN "A ROYAL VAGABOND"

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

TIMOROUS pedagogues in less engrossing subjects freely admitted when the instructions in playwriting impended in various seats of learning that they viewed its introduction with alarm. Anything so fascinating as a part of a college curriculum might reasonably be expected to have a prejudicial influence on other departments. Students might reasonably be absorbed in the mysteries of such education while indifferent to the enlightenment on less picturesque topics elsewhere provided. The opportunity to grow suddenly familiar with the theatre and all its mysteries under the guise of education was naturally a source of apprehension to the professors, who were compelled to struggle along with the handicap of conventional subjects. Of the results of this new department in the colleges it may not yet be possible authoritatively to speak. It seems, however, from a superficial view of the field, as if some students were still to be found in other lecture rooms.

But what will happen when the colleges follow the announced example of Columbia University and set out to instruct students in the mysteries of the cinema? It is said that a careful census would reveal even more writers of scenarios in this country than there are potential dramatists. Few have escaped this new ambition. All ages and kinds are represented among the workers for the movies. They may be expected to enroll numerously in the new classes.

Will they be taught the means of writing the kind of a scenario that the producer will like? Will they be able to detect the rapid changes in the wishes of the producers presumably founded on the knowledge of what the public wants? For instance, no lesson to the scenario writers just now could be so practical as the manner in which they should write a play for the camera in which there should be as little outlay for scenery as possible and as much as possible for frocks. For the cinema is just now passing through a dressing mania which at a somewhat earlier period afflicted the drama. The millinery of the women must be made as elaborate as possible in order that the spectators of the same sex may be kept enthralled as the fashion show discloses itself reel after reel.

Of course correspondence schools have for years been aiming to teach that large proportion of the population of these United States interested in writing scenarios this difficult and erudite art, but the acquisition of such knowledge in the classic shades of Columbia University must be more thrilling.

Think of being able to discourse learnedly of the rise and fall of the vampire, the comparative vogue of the Western drama of William Hart, as compared with the athletics of Douglas Fairbanks, the influence of the ancient art of pantomime on the salary of Charles Chaplin, Elsie Ferguson's interpretation of Ibsen as shown in the cinema of "A Doll's House" in comparison with Alla Nazimova's acting of *Hedda Gabler*, the advantages of a whirlwind tour in vaudeville to refurbish the popularity of a declining vampire, Cuddles Lee as a future Mary Pickford, the income tax as a final criterion of the merit of a movie star—all these themes will be easy to the cultivated alumnus of the cinema department of such a university as Columbia.

There are many other details, moreover, in which the culture of the earnest student will be highly improved. When is a prima donna voiceless enough for the camera? How many titles are indispensable to make the simplest story of a most childish fiction comprehensible to an intelligent spectator? What word is in accordance with the highest standards of English "picturization," "photoplay," "cameriza tion" or "screenation"? In what dictionaries is "to film" as a verb approved?

So it goes. This new department of education will be able to scatter seeds of learning on all sides. Possibly some of them will fall on appreciative ears and there will after a while be a generation really informed on the great industry of the cinema.

Whether or not political interest in Ireland to-day runs so high that even the horses in their stalls at night talk about Parnell may not after all be established by "Dark Rosaleen," which David Belasco has so illuminatingly realized on the stage of the Belasco Theatre. That poetic uncertainty must be left to swim in the Celtic twilight along with other symbolism that the authors have put into their work. Perhaps, after all, it is the failure of this superstitious element in the play to blend with its theatrical quality—Boucicault theatre at that—which marks the widest divergence between intent and accomplishment that the new drama reveals.

The technique of "The Colleen Bawn," or perhaps more accurately a creditable attempt at it, is difficult to adjust to the moods of Yeats or his former associates in the Irish theatre. Yet it is a certain amount of this mood that imparts a fine quality to "Dark Rosaleen."

But it is in reality the humor of the work that counts. The sketches of Irish character may show no original traits and they may keep well within the conventional conceptions of Irish fun in the theatre, but it is the very best of its kind. The (three) friends who in battle or peace are always together and group themselves with such a strongly national aspect in the pictures of the three acts, are always delightful. Their narrowness and prejudice, their truculency and their eagerness to surpass one another which is exhibited by the two most active figures of the trio, is irresistibly set forth by Mr. Belasco. Uncommonly like the lamented Edward Harrigan in the rich unction and the fine quality of his speech is Walter Edwin, hitherto little known to fame, while our old friend Patrick John Murphy plays the irritable little Irishman to the life. He might be almost a representative of Impudence as compared to the Dignity that resides in every movement and action of Robert Cummings as his friend and invariable antagonist. The tall and rather timorous P. J. Kelly as the last of the trio is a grotesquely amusing figure. Like the others, he seems to have appeared in Irish plays before, although none of them is known to local fame.

Nor for that matter was Thomas Mitchell until he was brought by Mr. Belasco to act the role of the knowing young man of the family, who had been to Chicago and learned a thing or two there. His efforts to impress this knowledge on the town of his birth contributed potently to the fun of the play, which will, after all, be the quality by which "Dark Rosaleen" will, in spite of its blind fiddler, its talking horses and nationalistic tendencies, be remembered by the public.

LOUISE ALLEN in "SOMEBODY'S SWEETHEART"

ELIZABETH BRICE in "TOOT SWEET"

It is interesting always to await until the barrage of preliminary talk and mere time filling has been cleared away in a farce to discover what the real motive of the piece is to be. It was perhaps not as satisfying as usual in the case of "I Love You," since William Le Baron's unessential talk at the beginning of the first act was about as entertaining as anything his play later developed. After a while, however, the conversation narrowed down in its scope and the motive of the farce appeared. It proved, of course, to be one of the old boys and there was no lack of interest for that reason. Even first nighters have learned to have that respect for the tried and proven which gives them a sense of security. The hero of new work was a rather tired millionaire. He had theories that he liked to impress on the world. One was that what was thought to be love was no more than a uestion of environment. He would prove that or lose $5,000.

Now that the cat was out of the bag the audience knew what the game was and could settle back comfortably in its seat. Of course the task of the playwright if he knew his metier at all was to show that this man of many ideas knew nothing at all. So the other couples in the house party might be as affectionate as they chose. But it was the duty of the playwright to keep the predestined lovers as far apart as possible. Mr. Le Baron of course did that and even added a lady's maid of undoubtedly native origin to remain the subject of the experiment that he was almost hers. Mild amusement accompanied the progress of the fable.

Of course the pretext of bringing all the characters two by two under the electric light which fell over the sofa and lighted the hydrangeas and the copy of Shelley's poems while the rest of the room was in darkness and a violinist discoursed the music of a supposedly moving waltz—this had the invariable effect of such obvious devices after a while and became mechanical. But what is most delightful in the work of William Le Baron is not in the least mechanical.

Indeed he is quite the freshest and most stimulating writer of comic dialogue among the new dramatists. His talent is less fantastic, less whimsical, more worldly than that of Clare Kummer and suited therefore to more markets. It is not in the least of the hackneyed and trite school of Bolton and Wodehouse or whoever may write the speeches in the joint output of those two playwrights. The speeches of the men and women that serve to carry on the Le Baron car of drama is invariably delightful to hear. But what could it be were this cheering talk an expression of the dramatic situation? How much more would every sentence count in the general results did Mr. Le Baron's characters speak their own thoughts instead of the playwright.

So there is in his case as in the case of so many of our dramatists the regret that there is not combined with this facility for smart and entertaining talk the ability to tell a story and moreover to relate it in the idiom of the theatre. Again, there is the irresistible impulse to interfere and attend to what may not be, strictly speaking, one's own business. Again there is the occasion to regret that there is so little collaboration among our dramatists. If Mr. Le Baron had no more to do with his pretty gift for the witty phrase than to embroider fiction more engrossing than he seems able to create or festoon some sturdier dramatic skelton with his flowering humor, there would be more complete excellence in his product than there is at present. But this advice to collaborate seems a regular diagnosis of the weakness in the case of every writer of clever dialogue that appears from time to time on the horizon.

FROM TAILOR TO PRINCE.

"HOW do you like being a Prince?"

"It was easier being a tailor."

Still Grant Mitchell, whose name and fame have for nearly three years rested with "A Tailor Made Man," confessed that the royalty of "A Prince There Was," which he assumed last week, was very alluring.

"Of course I've hardly caught my princelike breath yet," explained Mr. Mitchell after a matinee performance at George M. Cohan's Theatre. "You see I had been a tailor going on three seasons, day in and day out—or night in and night out. Although, to be exact, there weren't any nights out in the run of 'A Tailor Made Man.' This year on tour we've been playing most of the time Sundays as well as week days. The actual number of times I've played the tailor, according to count, is 882.

"Now think of doing the same thing 882 times without getting just a little the worse for the wear. You may say that most of us have to do the same thing 8 times 882 times—but it really isn't quite the same. You know what Henry James—or was it William—said about a duty becoming a habit after it had been done from three to thirty times.

"One can do almost anything mechanically—that is, without special mental effort—after the thirtieth time. Almost anything except acting! You can't do a part mechanically and hope to entertain your audience. Yet the longer you play a part—after the hundredth time or so—the harder it gets not to be mechanical. But so many actors have been saying this for so many years that most playgoers understand all about it, I am sure.

"I never expect to play a part I will like better than 'A Tailor Made Man.' In fact I wouldn't like to think I would never play it again. It's one part in a lifetime. Still, I was glad enough last week for the opportunity to step into 'A Prince There Was.'

"I had only a week's rehearsal—although that is not a record, when so many actors have stepped into parts on twenty-four, even four hours' notice. Still a week seemed little enough to me. After those 882 performances of one part, my mind wasn't exactly absorbent to another. It wasn't receptive to new lines or a new character. It understood the psychology of a tailor, and it didn't welcome the palingenesis into a Prince.

"I practically learned 'A Prince There Was' last week at meals. I studied the first act for breakfast, the second for luncheon and the third for dinner. It's fortunate there weren't four or five acts. Between these repasts I used to walk and try to memorize. I had the advantage of one rehearsal with Mr. Cohan, which was priceless. Also, I had the good fortune to see him in the part. Besides that, the company gave me the rarest, most responsive help. It was like having an army behind you—you simply couldn't fail. Really, no Prince in history was ever helped into his royal raiments more gracefully than I was into this part of 'A Prince There Was.'"

"But still you'd rather be a tailor?"

"I said it was easier—just now. Lightning transformations are a strain for me, and the Prince completely reverses the order of the tailor. One began in rags and ended in royal raiment—with the Prince it's just the opposite. Here's another reason why I'm so grateful to Mr. Cohan for letting me play the Prince. Having been a tailor so long, I might easily have been grooved as a 'type' and never have been allowed to play anything but a tailor, or drummer, or something else connected with the clothing business. Things like that have been known to happen, in an actor's life.

"Basically, of course, the Prince and the Tailor are of the same genre. Each is an American, and each discovers that he can't live up to the spirit of his country without ambition, adventure, enthusiasm and work. I believe both parts are representative and have a general appeal. Both plays are entertaining."

"Would you like to play 'A Prince There Was' 882 times?"

"Why not?" replied Grant Mitchell. "By that time I'd be ready to go back to rags and 'A Tailor Made Man.'"

PAULINE LORD in "OUR PLEASANT SINS" © by HIXON CONNELLY

PHOEBE HUNT in "A PRINCE THERE WAS"

IN MEMORIAL—THE MATINEE IDOL.

MATINEE idols, playwrights American and foreign, and the technique of acting sound like a wide range of subjects for one interview, but they are not too many for Lowell Sherman, who plays with distinction an important part in "The Woman in Room 13," the popular melodrama now at the Republic Theatre.

"If there ever was a matinee idol," says Mr. Sherman, "his day is past. No more scented letters from gushy matinee girls, nor flowers of tribute from middle aged romanticists. I don't suppose there ever was a genuine vogue of that sort of thing, but it is supposed to have had its day and to have happily passed away. The matinee idol is vanished with the lady of the milk bath and the lady of the stolen jewels.

"If you ask me what killed the matinee idol I should say better plays. There is no dearth of real plays in America. There is too much inclination, however, to idolize everything that has a foreign label on it. Everybody remembers the history of 'The Yellow Jacket.' When it was originally produced in New York city some years ago it was a complete failure, but after it had attained a success in almost every European country it was revised here with the tag of its European success upon it and was cordially received. This is equally true of general literature as it is of plays.

"Such playwrights as Clyde Fitch, Paul Potter, Samuel Shipman, Max Marcin, Augustus Thomas, George Broadhurst and Edwarr Sheldon are not only representative of American life and manners in their best work, but they are competent and talented writers for the theatre, and their work is held in esteem on the other side. They have their own virtues, which are not appreciated as generally as they ought to be because they are newer virtues, such as spring from the new characteristics of American life. Their plays have vigor, dramatic movement, powerful situations, crisp dialogue and vivid characterization. I think they are as typical of America as Shaw and Pinero are of England, Bernstein of France and Sudermann of Germany. Detract the glamour of the foreign label, remove the prestige of the foreign names, consider the generations of foreign plays and playwrights and you will find that the American dramatists have done supremely well.

"Personally, I believe that the best acting comes from the imagination and not from the emotions. Coquelin upheld this view, while Irving opposed it. I do not think it is necessary for an actor to feel his role in order to play it well. On the contrary, I believe it leads to false emotion and exaggerated realism. Let the actor imagine the emotions of the character he is portraying and then let him stand off and paint those emotions with the technical resources at his command, as an artist would paint a portrait."

Mr. Sherman, in addition to having had a wide and varied experience in the theatre on his own account, comes of a theatrical family. His maternal grandmother played with Junius Brutus Booth, Sr., at the Boston Museum and went with him to the Jenny Lind Theatre in California. She also played with Edwin Booth. His mother was also at one time on the stage. His father, John Sherman, was for some time connected with the Baldwin Theatre, San Francisco.

Where the Plays Change.

SHUBERT-RIVIERA—"The Melting of Molly," the Shuberts' musical comedy production, is scheduled to make all comers at this house dissolve in laughter.

LEXINGTON—Frances Ferne and the Broadway Players will present Avery Hopwood's farce, "Fair and Warmer," which is good for two hours of laughs no matter what the weather is.

SEVENTH AVENUE—William Courtenay and Thomas Wise will start the first leg of their nationwide campaign for Oliver Morosco's production, "Cappy Ricks."

THE NEW PLAYS.

MONDAY—Globe Theatre: Charles Dillingham's summer musical comedy, "She's a Good Fellow," with book by Anne Caldwell and music by Jerome Kern, will be presented here. It deals with a love affair in navy blue. The company includes Joseph Sanley, Ann Orr, Ivy Sawyer, the Duncan Sisters, Gertrude Maitland, Nellie Fillmore, Florence Edney and troops more.

WEDNESDAY—Princess Theatre: "Toot Sweet," an overseas revue with Elizabeth Brice in the stellar role, will be produced here under the management of William Morrissey. Miss Brice and Mr. Morrissey, both of whom engaged in the entertainment of soldiers in France, have compounded the show from the best bits that were done in the huts and billets over there, and it will be produced along the lines of similar performances. The company will comprise May Boley, Clarence Nordstrom, Lon Hascall, Edward Miller, Tom Penfold, Jeanette Tourneur and several squads in addition. The chorus will be made up of Salvation Army lasses, Red Cross nurses, aviators and doughboys. The music was composed by Richard A. Whiting, the lyrics by Raymond B. Egan and the book by Mr. Morrissey.

PLAYS THAT LAST.

Astor, "East Is West"; Belmont, "Our Pleasant Sins"; Bijou, "Three for Diana"; Booth, "I Love You"; Broadhurst, "39 East"; Casino, "Some Time"; Central, "Somebody's Sweetheart"; Cohan, "A Prince There Was"; Cohan & Harris, "The Royal Vagabond"; Comedy, "Toby's Bow"; Cort, "The Better 'Ole"; Criterion, "Three Wise Fools"; Eltinge, "Up in Mabel's Room"; Empire, "Dear Brutus"; Forty-eighth Street, "Come-on Charley"; Forty-fourth Street, "Take It From Me"; Fulton, "Please Get Married"; Gaiety, "Lightnin'"; Garrick, "Bonds of Interest"; Globe, "The Honor of the Family"; Greenwich Village, "Shakuntala"; Harris, "The Good Bad Woman"; Henry Miller's, "Mis' Nelly of N'Orleans"; Hudson, "Friendly Enemies"; Knickerbocker, "Listen Lester"; Liberty, "Moliere"; Longacre, "Three Faces East"; Lyceum, "Daddies"; Lyric, "The Unknown Purple"; Maxine Elliott's, "Tea for Three"; New Amsterdam, "The Velvet Lady"; New Amsterdam Roof, "Combination Frolic"; Nora Bayes, "Come Along"; Playhouse, "Forever After"; Plymouth, "The Jest"; Punch and Judy, Marionettes; Republic, "The Woman in Room 13"; Selwyn, "Tumble In"; Shubert, "Good Morning, Judge"; Thirty-ninth Street, "Oh, My Dear"; Vanderbilt, "A Little Journey"; Winter Garden, "Monte Cristo, Jr."